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**PENNEKAMP PARK'S
U/W PLAYMATES**

**A DIVER'S FOND
LOOK AT CALIF'S
CHANNEL ISLES**

**UNDERSTANDING
HEAT LOSS
IN DIVERS**

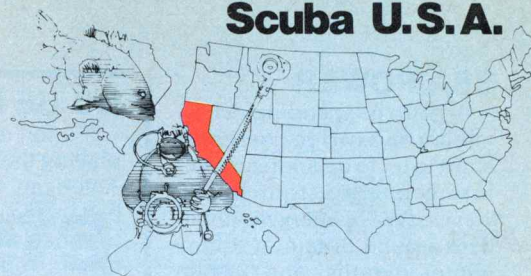
**SDM
SPOTLIGHTS:
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Scuba U.S.A.



Less than a dozen miles off the coastline of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties in Southern California are the intriguing Northern Channel Islands. Here, dwarf mammoths roamed during the Ice Age and in 1542 Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo discovered these islands and was buried here a year later.

Today, Anacapa, Santa Cruz, Santa Rosa and San Miguel Islands are visited by hundreds of boaters and divers monthly, who are discovering the primitive and enchanting beauty prevalent to these unspoiled Channel Islands.

Anacapa Island is part of Channel Islands National Monument, which is governed by the U.S. Dept. of Interior. Nesting grounds for the brown pelican, this island was named Anacapa by the extinct Chumash Indians. Meaning ever-changing, it appears differently from the mainland when weather conditions change. Anacapa is the closest of all the Channel Islands, as only 11 miles separate it from Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard. Diving at Anacapa offers rich and abundant marine life, in usually clear water, occasionally up to 100 feet visibility during the fall and winter months. Lobster, abalone, and game fish abound for the underwater hunter . . . but for the underwater photographer it's a paradise. Huge rocky reefs blanketed with corypactis anemones lift up from the sand bottom making craggy canyons and crevices for the golden garibaldi to cruise about. Colorful brittle stars cover the reefs and bottom almost appearing to strangle fragile tube anemones, and multi-colored nudibranchs graze on the reefs in search of coral and hydroids, while the tube worm extends his magnificent plume to feed on the rich marine organisms living in the water. Giant columns of kelp reach upward toward the sun glistened surface, while marine snails and crabs graze amidst the twisting stalks and microscopic bryozoan live on its giant leaves. Lacy, delicate jellyfish glide through the maze of kelp, as schools of fish swim endlessly through this giant underwater garden.

A popular dive area at Anacapa is East

California's Channel Islands

By Jim Cooluris

Fish Camp, tucked in the backside of the island offers a good dive spot and refuge from northwest winds. The depth varies from the shore to over 60 feet at the outer kelp bed. The heavy kelp close to shore hides many rocky reefs, some visible above water at low tide. Abalone can be found on these reefs as well as lobster in the shallow eel grass. The deeper rocks are havens for rock fish and octopus. Also, this is where the tuna clipper *Equator* sank in 1949. Not much is left except for a few scattered remaining pieces of junk, the rudder and anchor can be seen close to the cliffs of the island in about six feet of water.

My favorite spot for photography at Anacapa Island is on the north side of the island, just inside the west tip. This is called the Goldfish Bowl, since diving here is like swimming in a huge aquarium. Many garibaldi inhabit the tall crevices and cliffs underwater. Just 25 yards from the island, it's 60 feet deep with varying shallower depths to 20 feet at the island's edge. Sheephead, lingcod, cabezon, sculpin, calico bass, and many other types of fish abound here. The rocks are covered with multitudes of marine life, such as abalone, scallops, anemones, sponges and corals. The Goldfish Bowl is certainly one of the most beautiful areas of Anacapa Island. Since Anacapa Island is a National Monument, collecting of any marine life other than legal game is not permitted. This is to preserve the natural underwater beauty surrounding the island.

The largest of the California Channel Islands is Santa Cruz Island. Twenty-one miles in length, Santa Cruz is privately owned by two different interests. A popular island for the boater to spend days cruising, Santa Cruz has many small coves for a night's refuge, but as the other islands, there are not many public facilities. The early Chumash Indians inhabited Santa Cruz for over 300 years, sustaining on marine life and sea mammals.

Today, as in the past, Santa Cruz Island is rich with marine life, affording the modern sport diver with abalone, scallops, lobsters, and game fish. Huge kelp beds cover rock ledges and reefs rich with



KELP DIVER

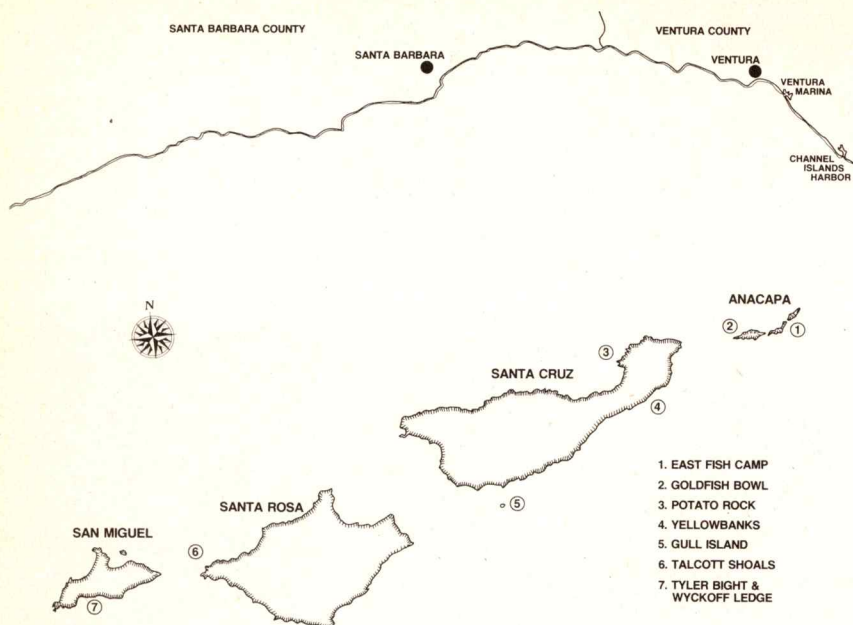
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ANEMONE



CALIFORNIA SCALLOP



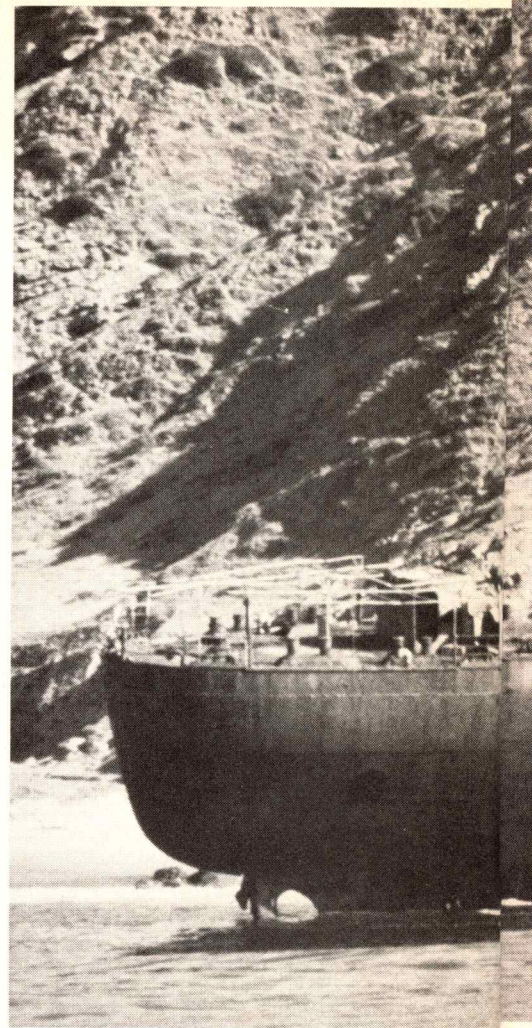
Just a few miles off the coast line of California are the intriguing Northern Channel Islands. One of the prominent landmarks on Santa Rosa island is the wreck of the *Chickasaw*, a freighter that went aground near South Point sometime in 1953.

marine life. Underwater clarity varies from 20 feet to over 75 feet during winter months.

A great dive spot on the north side of the island is Potato Rock, outside of Potato Harbor in 85 feet of water. This is an enormous rock that is hidden 15 feet to 20 feet under the water's surface. *Corynactis* anemones and many other anemones cover this rock like living velvet. Rock scallops are plentiful here, including many varieties of rock fish, such as lingcod, and sheephead. Since my main interest underwater is photography, I especially enjoy diving Potato Rock, for here I can find many subjects large or small and the spectrum of colors range greatly.

The most popular dive area at Santa Cruz is Yellowbanks. Often dived, but plentifully abundant, Yellowbanks consists of a huge area of several square miles. Easily recognized by the lightly colored bluffs of the cliffs on the south side of the island, the depth varies from 15 feet to over 90 feet in a grand kelp bed. Huge scallops, red and white abalone seems to flourish here, as a diver can always find his limit here in one dive. Lobster seek refuge among the long rock ledges common to the underwater terrain at Yellowbanks. Occasionally the current comes up — quite strong at times — hiding the kelp well under the water's surface. Needless to say, this makes diving here impossible at best, so use discretion.

Gull Island, far on the back side of the island is a favorite dive area, but not often dived by the sport diver since it is almost 35 miles from the mainland. This is a relatively shallow area, mostly 10 to 30 feet with lots of kelp, big red abalone and sea urchins. Commercial abalone and urchin divers harvest Gull Island regularly, but still there is an abundance of game. Many sea lions and harbor seals inhabit the surrounding rocks and curiously check out the divers underwater. When underwater visibility is good, Gull Island is an underwater photographer's delight. Fish swim up and seem to pose for the



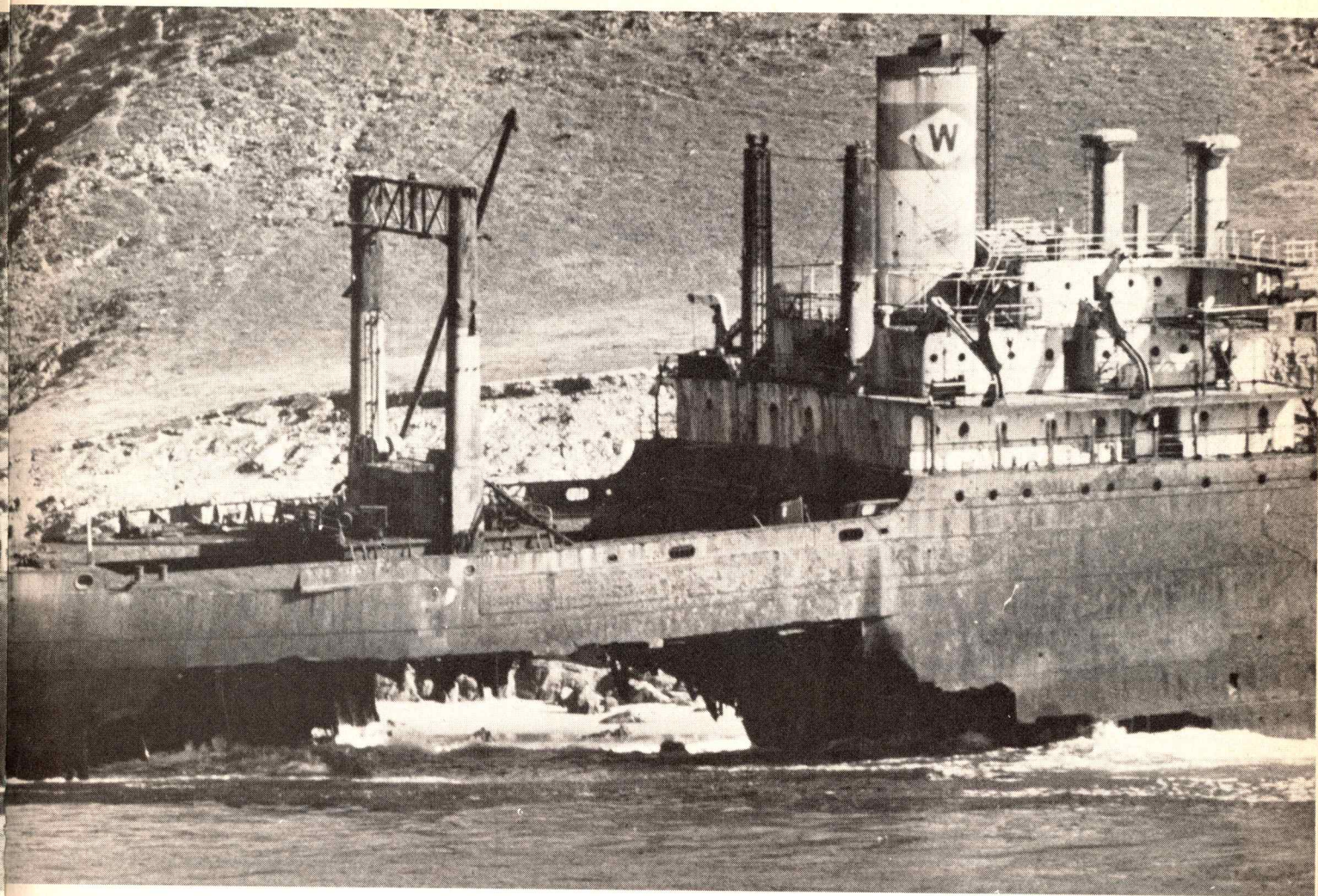
camera. Many colorful anemones live on the bottom as well as a species of unusual purple coral not found elsewhere on Santa Cruz Island.

Santa Rosa Island is the third island in this chain. Almost 40 miles out to sea, it is privately owned by a cattle company, who operates a huge cattle ranch on the island. Archaeologists have discovered complete skeletons of a species of dwarf mammoths which roamed here in prehistoric times. These skeletons can be seen in their reassembled state at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

Dived mostly by commercial abalone and urchin divers, Santa Rosa offers good diving for abalone and lobster as well as the wreck diver. The *Chickasaw*, a freighter that went aground near South Point in 1953, is a prominent landmark. Visiting the wreck can be hazardous, as the ocean swells are sometimes huge and crash over the rusting hulk on the shore.

Talcott Shoals on the northwest tip of Santa Rosa is a popular dive area with depths from 0 to 60 feet. Long known for the big lobster and abalone that have been taken from here, the shoal area also is where the *Aggie* went aground here in 1915. Unfortunately, trips to the Shoals are blown out occasionally by the strong northwest winds and seas hitting this area.

Wind blown San Miguel Island is the farthest island from the



mainland, but it is the most historic of the Channel Islands and shelters the biggest marine life.

Spanish explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo is thought to have been buried on San Miguel in 1543, only a year after he first discovered the island. To date his grave has not been found, although a monument has been erected on the island in his honor. Enormous sea elephants, fur seals and sea lions inhabit the shores of San Miguel Island, one of the largest rookeries of marine mammals in California.

San Miguel is owned by the U.S. Navy and maintained by the National Park Service. Entry on to the island is forbidden to protect the mammals and birds from intrusion by man. Even aircraft must maintain a minimum altitude of 1000 feet, as not to disturb the rookeries.

Again, dived mostly by commercial divers for abalone and sea urchins, the sport diver will find an abundance of big, red abalone. Underwater visibilities are occasionally reduced due to ocean swells and wind, although excellent visibility has been reported by certain commercial urchin divers who dive here often. On the south side of San Miguel Island is a good dive area, consisting of a sandy bottom with a few rocky reefs in a cove teeming with huge red abalone in shallow water. Halibut are found out in the sand. Nearby at Wyckoff Ledge,

large red abalone abound and the reef is alive with marine life. On the outside of the reef, 45 feet deep, underwater photography is especially good here when the water is clear.

Close, or remote, all these islands have dive grounds rich with underwater game, marine life, wrecks and scenery for the enthusiastic diver, whether you are an undersea hunter, explorer or photographer. Water temperatures range from the low 50's during the winter and early spring months to an occasional 70 during the summer and early fall months necessitating a quarter inch wet suit or dry suit for warmth.

The primary factor for planning a trip out to the Channel Islands is the weather. The Santa Barbara Channel, as it is called between these islands and the mainland, can be as placid as a millpond or a treacherous sea capable of taming an experienced skipper. During the late spring, summer and early fall months, heavy fog can reduce topside visibility greatly.

Camping is allowed on Anacapa Island since it is a National Monument, but only in designated areas on the east end of the island near the lighthouse. Facilities are nonexistent and you must bring your own food, water and firewood. For more information on camping on Anacapa Island, and how to get your equipment and supplies to the island, contact: The Island Packers, 1695 Anchors Way Dr., Ventura, CA 93003, or The



Typical of the California coastline are the giant kelp beds that rise from the ocean like columns reaching upward toward the sun.

National Park Service, 1699 Anchors Way Dr., Ventura, CA 93003. Both are located in the Ventura Marina.

Remember, the other islands are privately owned and going ashore is prohibited without prior written permission and then the permit is restrictive. For the major part of Santa Cruz Island, contact: Santa Cruz Island Co., 515 So. Flower St., L.A., CA 90071, or for entry onto the eastern tip of the island, contact: Francis Gherimi, 162 South A Street, Oxnard, CA 93030. For Santa Rosa Island, contact: Vail & Vickers, 123 W. Padre St., Santa Barbara, CA 93105. Going ashore on San Miguel Island is not permitted except for official business.

To get to the islands by private boat: Channel Islands Harbor in Oxnard is the closest point of land to Anacapa Island and the eastern tip of Santa Cruz Island. Be sure you have plenty of gas, since fuel or supplies are not available once you leave the harbor. You can check on the weather with the Coast Guard before you leave. Ventura Marina and Santa Barbara Harbors have docking and landing facilities also.

To get to the islands by charter boat: A great way to dive at any of these islands would be by one of the many charter dive boats making trips to the Channel Islands. The skippers of these dive boats know the good dive sites and you don't have to worry about the anchor dragging while you're underwater, or if the wind comes up — just leave the driving to the skipper, while you relax in a bunk during the return trip home.

If you want more information on trips to the Channel Islands, contact any one of these shops. They can supply you with the latest water and weather conditions along the coast or at the offshore islands. The diving at the Channel Islands is among the best around; try them for an unforgettable dive experience.

CHARTER BOATS

PORT HUENEME HARBOR: The *Jeanne*, a 50-foot boat, write Port Hueneme Sportsfishing, Dock 1, Port Hueneme, CA 93041. The *Sea Ventures*, a 50-foot dive boat, write to Ventura County Skin & Scuba Schools, 2805 Palma Drive, Ventura, Calif. 93001.

CHANNEL ISLANDS HARBOR: The *Islander*, a 65-foot dive boat, write to Seafarer Dive Shop, 3600 Cabezon Way, Oxnard, CA 93030. The *Barbara Marie*, a 42-foot dive boat, write to Aqua-Ventures, 2172 Pickwick Dr., Camarillo, CA 93010. The *Sea-Bee*, a 45-foot dive boat and the *We-Seven*, a 40-foot dive boat, write Channel Islands Sportsfishing, 3825 Pelican Way, Oxnard, CA 93030.

SANTA BARBARA HARBOR: The *Coral Sea*, a 85-foot dive boat, write to Glen Miller, Breakwater, Santa Barbara, CA 93102. The *Emerald*, a 65-foot dive boat, write to Divers Den, 22 Anacapa St., Santa Barbara, CA 93102.

Ventura and Santa Barbara counties have a number of professional dive shops where you can obtain air, rentals, sales, service and information on the diving at the Channel Islands or along the coast.

OXNARD: The Seafarer Dive Shop, 3600 Cabezon Way, Channel Islands Harbor, Oxnard, (805) 985-6022.

SANTA BARBARA Area: The Divers Den, 22 Anacapa St., Santa Barbara Underwater Sports, at the Breakwater, Santa Barbara. Bob's Diving Locker, 500 Francis Botello Rd., Goleta. >